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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 19, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CORRINE BROWN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland, the majority leader, Mr. STENY HOYER.

AFTER FOUR YEARS, NO MORE BLANK CHECKS

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, 4 years ago tonight, our Commander in Chief, President Bush, gave the orders that instigated Operation Iraqi Freedom. Whether they supported the President's decision or not, all, and I emphasize "all" patriotic Americans prayed for our success as well as the safe return of our brave service men and women. And 4 years later, we still do. However, today our success in Iraq is as elusive as it ever was and has ever

been over the past 1,460 days. More than 3,200 American soldiers have given the ultimate measure of sacrifice, and more than 24,000 have been injured. The American taxpayers have spent more than \$400 billion on this war, and the President asked for an additional \$245 billion, including a \$100 billion wartime supplemental spending bill that will be considered on the floor later this week. And thousands of Iraqis have been killed, while literally millions have fled to neighboring countries, triggering a refugee crisis.

Yet despite the sacrifice and hardship, how much progress has been made? Just last week, the Department of Defense reported record levels of violence and hardening sectarian violence in the fourth quarter of 2006, stating, "Some elements of the situation in Iraq are properly descriptive of a civil war."

Administration officials themselves admitted last week that political goals that were to have been met by the Iraqi government this month will take significantly longer to achieve, said the administration. The National Intelligence Estimate tells us the war has increased the global terror threat rather than reduce it. And General Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, has issued strong warnings about the effect of this war on America's overall military readiness and our ability to respond to emerging strategic threats. Indeed, IKE SKELTON of Missouri, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said that the situation with respect to America's readiness of its Armed Forces is grave and troubling. Meanwhile, the American people have wearied of administration claims that are divorced from reality. "Mission accomplished" and "the insurgency is in its last throes" are just two of the assertions that have proved, sadly, very badly mistaken.

From the outset, the administration refused to commit a force commensu-

rate with the threat it articulated, and now it asks for patience while a fourth troop escalation seeks to accomplish what three others could not. It profoundly miscalculated the cost of this war. It went to war without a plan for postwar stabilization and security. And perhaps most egregiously, the administration sent our troops into battle without proper equipment.

Madam Speaker, given the repeated miscalculations by the administration over the last 4 years, and given the situation on the ground in Iraq, today it is past time, way past time for the United States Congress, the people's representatives, to insist on accountability and a new direction in Iraq.

As one who supported the authority of the President of the United States to remove Saddam Hussein, and in listening to the President's State of the Union when he said not one of us who voted voted for failure, that was accurate. I certainly did not vote for failure. And I want success and seek success, but the administration's policies have not garnered success. Therefore, more blank checks and questioning obeisance by this Congress would constitute, in my opinion, a dereliction of our responsibility and our constitutional duty. Thus, this Congress, for the first time in 4 years, will have the opportunity this week to change America's course in Iraq and to insist that the Iraqis take control of their own destiny.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act offers the best way forward in Iraq. I urge Members of both sides of the aisle to support it. And I would call the attention to many of our Members to a vote in June of 1997, where so many Members on the Republican side of the aisle voted to set a timetable, set a date certain for withdrawal or exit strategy in amendments sponsored by Mr. BUYER of Indiana in which all the present leaders of the Republican

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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